/155 cont./

361 villages are found. In the interior the population is very sparse, large villages seem to be absent there, and probably only kin groups or families that for some reason have become isolated live there (2).

2. [Cf. Ethn., I, p. 98. See also Coombe, pp. 186 f.]

161 In Utupua the population has dropped to 300 souls, and still lower in the once populous Vanikoro, whereas it is said that the preservation of the race has been better on the Reef Islands.

The reasons for the depopulation seem to be the same here as everywhere in the South Seas: the recruiting of workers and imported epidemics, as well as general demoralization as a result of contact with Whites, even though only casual here. Today alcohol is no longer imported into Nitendi. Plantation work is carried on in the Solomons, and even though the treatment of the workers there is strictly supervised by the British government, sicknesses cannot be kept at a distance from the Blacks, and they are then spread when the worker returns to his homeland. It is chiefly a matter of respiratory diseases, which are undoubtedly the most dangerous enemy of the natives. It may be said that every recruit ship brings new infections to the island, even though everyone on board seems to be healthy, infections which in a few days develop into dangerous cold and influenza epidemics, to which the old, the children, and the weak fall victim.

164 Aside from such imported diseases, the race seems to be healthy. I did not come across leprosy and elephantiasis, /156/ and fertility seems to be satisfactory. A woman seldom raises more than three children, however, and that alone would be sufficient to explain the population decline. The reasons for this may be frequent abortion, which again may rest on the general demoralization. This is an inevitable result of contact between a race of lower culture and Whites.